THE CONSTITUTION

In 1787, a group of fifty-five men gathered together and wrote a document that would define the United States government. This document is the Constitution of the United States, the oldest Constitution in the world today.

The men who gathered in Philadelphia were all leaders from different walks of life: lawyers, soldiers, doctors, teachers, farmers. Some of the men were old -- Benjamin Franklin was eighty-one years old! Jonathan Dayton, the youngest, was only twenty-six. Together, these different men all formed the “Constitutional Convention”, led by George Washington.

Before 1787, the young country was governed by the Articles of Confederation. Each of the states had a lot of independent power. But things weren’t working out well, because the states couldn’t agree on many things. The states needed to be united. Over a period of less than one hundred days, the Framers of the Constitution discussed, debated, and even argued about how to make a government that would work for everybody.

The Constitution of the United States made a federal government, a government for the whole country. This government has three branches. The Constitution created the Executive Branch, which is the office of President, one leader for all the states. It also created the Supreme Court, which is the Judicial Branch. Congress is the Legislative Branch. The Congress shows the amount of power that each state has, according to how many people live in that state. The Constitution says, in fewer than five thousand words, exactly how the United States government works.

The U.S. Constitution is one of the most important symbols of the United States. It defines the government. It shows us how people can work together to create a government that functions. It is a symbol of the original intent of the founders of the United States -- to make things perfect, fair, peaceful, and secure, for themselves and for the generations to come.
Answer the questions about **THE CONSTITUTION**

1. Who wrote the Constitution of the United States  
   a. A group of fifty-five men  
   b. Benjamin Franklin  
   c. George Washington  
   d. A group of lawyers

2. What is it famous for?  
   a. It was written on parchment  
   b. It explains how the U.S. government works  
   c. It replaced the Articles of Confederation  
   d. It was written very quickly

3. Where was it written?  
   a. Washington, D.C.  
   b. New York  
   c. Pittsburgh  
   d. Philadelphia

4. When was it written?  
   a. About a thousand years ago  
   b. About a hundred years ago  
   c. About two hundred years ago  
   d. About fifty-five years ago

5. Why is it considered as a symbol of America?  
   a. It defines the government and shows the ideals of the Founding Fathers  
   b. It is important to understanding how Congress works  
   c. It is in Philadelphia  
   d. It is in a glass case in the National Archives.
Use complete sentences to answer the questions below.

1. Describe an experience or situation in your life that is similar to the people meeting to draft the Constitution.

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________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

2. From the way it is used in the article what do you think is the meaning of *branch*?

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________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

3. What do you believe was the impact of the Constitution on the United States?

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4. Imagine yourself writing a constitution for a new country. Describe what you would include, and why.

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5. What do you understand differently after reading about the Constitution? How will you use this information in the future?

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Answers to THE CONSTITUTION

Multiple-choice
1. a
2. b
3. d
4. c
5. a

Short-answer
1. (Answers may vary, accept reasonable answers.)
2. Branch = division, section
3. (Answers may vary, accept reasonable answers.)
4. (Answers may vary, accept reasonable answers.)
5. (Answers may vary, accept reasonable answers.)